

critical digest

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Sept 6, 1954 Vol VI No 52. \$10 year The Weekly New York City Theatre Newsletter

New York Theatre Calender

Hayride- 9/13/54- 48th St. Hillbilly musical based on Richmond, Va. radio program featuring Sunshine Sue...The Pony Cart- 9/14/54. I B Joselew production of Roger Garis' new play with Louisa Hutton...Our Charles- 9/15/54 Morocco. Aldrich & Myers present Tallulah Bankhead in Alan Melville play...Midsummer's Night Dream- 9/21/54. S. Hurok presents Old Vic production with Moira Shearer...Home is Hero- Booth 9/22/54. Theatre Guilds presents Walter Macken in his own Irish play...All Summer Long 9/23/54. Playwrights Company presents Robert Anderson's new play with John Kerr, June Walker.

Strawhat Tryouts- Finale

Michael and Lavinia, John Matthews new comedy debuted at Matumuck, HI starring Uta Hagen, was panned as a studied satire which lacks the spark of spontaneity, by Malo, Variety. Script may be salvaged by a broader melodramatic performance, he noted...My Aunt Deas, Halper-Schrank comedy with Jo Van Fleet which tried out at Westport, Conn, Country Playhouse, is a poor script which received a poor production, reported Doul, Variety. Van Fleet acts as if she were Geraldine Page in a Shirley Booth vehicle, sums up trade paper mugg.

Out of Town Tryouts

Midsummer Night's Dream production of Old Vic debuted at Edinburgh, Scotland, Festival, Darlington, NY Times, stated that Robert Helpmann is the hit of the production, while Moira Shearer's voice is very hard to hear. Emphasis on music, ballet and spectacle, he adds, lessens comic effect of Shakespeare...Home is the Hero, which debuted at Westport, Conn, Country Playhouse, is a fine, sombre new play by and with Walter Macken of Dublin, rates Doul, Variety. It is an Irish play engagingly free of most of the cliches of most Irish plays, critic okayed.

Hurricane Hits Eastern Summer Theatres

News reports of the effects of "Hurricane Carol" included the closing from one to three days of several summer theatres on the eastern seacoast. Westhampton Beach, New York, was closed most of the week because of lack of power and audience. Tent theatres at Hyannis, Mass and Cohasset, Mass were literally blown away. Coonamassett, Mass., and Oquinit, Maine, were both closed half a week due to power failures.

Bucks County Sept Schedule

Michael Ellis will continue productions at his Bucks County, Pa. Playhouse through Nov 28. Following Sabrina Fair with Constance Bennett, he will present Gaby Rodgers in The Facts of Life, a new play by John D Hess, the week of Sept 13. Louis Beauchner and Nancy Marshall will appear the week of Sept 20 in Patricia Collinge's adaptation of the French farce Dame Nature. Magda Gabor stars in Bernadine the week of Sept 27. A tryout of Arnold Sundgaard's Kilgo Run with Eileen Heckart and Conrad Janis will open Oct 4.

' Off Broadway '

Theatre 12's production of Sartre's The Flies will be repeated at Cherry Lane Sept 8-14. Bert Greene presents the new English version directed by Dennis Vaughan.

Broadway Chapel Players will open their second season of Sunday vespers service productions with professional cast at Broadway Tabernacle Church Sun, Oct 10 at 5 PM with a production of Andre Obey's Noah. Bill Penn, organizer of the group, has been appointed to the Commission on Drama of the Department of Worship and the Arts of the National Council of Churches, NYC. Richard Barr will direct. Performances will be given through Dec 12. Tickets may be applied for by writing the Church, 56th St and Broadway.

Players Theatre production of The Cretan Woman may move to Bijou Oct 14... The Early Primrose has moved to 63 E 4... Sing Me No Lullaby has moved forward its opening at Phoenix from Oct 5 to Oct 14. Richard Kiley will have a leading role... Losers Holiday a new musical comedy by Richard Besoyan will be presented for limited run Off Broadway this fall by Howard Barker-Robert McDonald.

The Flies production by Theatre 12 presented at Cherry Lane is nearer a reading than a finished production, panned Herridge, Post. Pacing is too slow, the lines not always audible. Actors were very uneven, some good, some bad.

' West Coast '

Las Palmas Theatre, L.A. which now houses That's Life revue, has been bought by Theodore Joy for \$85,000... The Golden Touch, new play by Claire Parish, will be presented at Geller Theatre, L.A. by Leon Lord.

The Vacant Lot, Paul Strader-Berilla Kerr's new play debuted at La Jolla, fails to sustain the mood born of the involved symbolism, pene Kean, Daily Variety.

' Theatre Magazine Notes '

Houston's Alley Theatre producer Nina Vance is featured in article in Sept. "Charm"...Arthur Miller is writing article on American theatre scene for Holiday...James Thurber filed an essay entitled "Get THREE to a Monastery" in New Yorker's theatre department.

' Theatre Book Notes '

Random House will publish Kismet and The Pajama Game Michael Redgrave's new book will be entitled "I Am Not A Camera" and will be published by Heinemann, London.

' Theatre Film Notes '

Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh will star with Ralph Richardson, John Gielgud, Michael Redgrave in film version of "Richard III"...Eva LeGallienne makes her film debut in "Prince of Players"...Ginger Rogers stars in "Dead Pigeon"...Shirley MacLane, understudy to Carol Haney in Pajama Game, has been signed to term contract by Hal Wallis.

' Theatre TV Notes '

Best of Broadway CBS Series opens Wed, Sept 15 with all star production of The Powell Family. David Brookman has been assigned to direct music for series.

' Vaudeville '

Jackie Bright, Howell & Radcliffe, Valentine & Rita Vidbel's Elephants are featured at Palace stage show. Film is "Down 3 Dark Streets" with Broderick Crawford.

Green Room Department

REVIEWING SERIOUS DRAMAS... Plays with ideas, with important things to say and possessing a certain suggestion of intellectual content, necessarily call for a high standard of judgement, explains Watts, Post. It is the job of the reviewer to bear on such plays this more rigorous standard of examination. It is also his job to point out that it is the more important quality present in what he is writing about that calls for the rigor. The critic in such cases, he feels, should see that the emphasis in his review is properly placed on the merits.

COLUMN TIPS... A Broadway producer will be challenged to a duel by Oleg Cassini, heirs Winchell... NBC is offering \$65,000 to Katharine Hepburn to appear in a TV play, reports Kilgallen... Harry Nemo's all Negro musical The Happy Way will be the best since Blackbirds, predicts Sobel.

ON BRITISH PLAYERS... British acting is on the whole better than American acting if the actor is pushing forty, sums up Kerr, Herald Tribune, after several weeks of London playgoing. While young English actors can be quite as dull, and quite as hollow as some of the earnest amateurs who produce plays much too big for them on the Broadway fringes. The middle aged British actor develops because he accepts all kind of acting jobs. American actors after a few Broadway credits start to choose their scripts and roles.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Can-Can's Lilo is a human dynamo who can belt the bricks out of the back wall of a theatre, raves Coleman, Mirror... The advent of Hayride, the hillbilly musical starring Sunshine Sue, is not frightening, Billboard editorial points out to Kilgallen, Journal American, who panned same. Trade paper finds more frightening fact that columnist can express with such consummate bad taste her lack of knowledge of one of show business' major forms.

AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE... Any attempt to teach the British accent to students of the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre and Academy at Stratford, Conn., will be regarded by Chapman, News, as an act of infiltration and subversion. The American language, properly spoken, is a beautiful tongue. The American Negro has the finest speaking and acting voice, critic states, and should be included on the staff of Lawrence Langer's project.

INTERVIEW HL-LITES... Chester Morris and Joseph Buloff, the new leads in The Fifth Season, both were offered the script first time round and both turned it down, McHarry, News, learned... Summer theatre audiences now follow the stars, not the plays, Richard Aldrich, who ran who ran 3 Cape barns, told Marhouse, VT & S... Mia Slavenska, ballerina at Arabian Nights, commuted daily 106 miles from her Demarest, NJ, home to Jones Beach, LI, reports Herridge, Post.

Pros & Cons by IMK

Fifth Season's success or failure in NY with almost an entirely new cast will be watched with interest. If it succeeds after a "summer vacation" it will be one of the few shows in recent years that was able to close down for the warm period and then resume. Usually this trick is merely wishful thinking by the producer. The ticket buying public is not as hopeful, and usually likes to buy tickets to shows

they know will be open. In the past producers have been forced to submit to stars demands for summer vacations. This in the past has meant posting a closing notice when star leaves. Teahouse of August Moon solved its problem by replacing David Wayne for a ten week period with Burgess Meredith. Producer will give money back to any patron not satisfied with the substitution. "Vacations" in the theatre are hectic and costly.

A campaign to urge the Post Office Department to issue a series of stamps commemorating persons who have contributed to the art of the theatre in the US has been set up by Jacques Minkus, manager of Gimbel's stamp department. The group has received the endorsement of the Council of the Living Theatre, Katharine Cornell, and Guthrie McClintic. Shakespeare appears on a stamp of Hungary, while Sarah Bernhardt is honored on a French stamp.

Plays

Playwrights Company production of The Traveling Lady moved forward to Oct 27... Sidney Kingsley's as yet untitled play will open Dec 9 at Broadhurst... Portrait of a Lady with Jennifer Jones will open Dec 9 at ANTA Playhouse... What Every Woman Knows with Helen Hayes opens Jan 5 at City Center... Hello Fafae revue with Charles Trenet and June Rickman will be produced by William Taub and will open on Broadway in mid-November... Sarah Churchill will present a dramatized reading of Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw's letters.

People

92,000 estimated attendance at 13 Broadway shows week of Sept 1-Sept 8 by "CD."... Joey Faye joined The Tender Trap cast... Ward Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun, will cover Broadway openings for North American Newspaper Alliance in a weekly feature... Ruth McDevitt replaced Josephine Hull who has resigned from The Solid Gold Cadillac Joan Grey subbing for Betsy von Furstenberg in Oh Men, Oh Women... Curtain of latter show held to 9 PM Aug 31 to allow Tony Randall to fulfill TV role... Doro Merande, Calvin Thomas and Katherine Squire added to The Traveling Lady.

Summer Playhouses & Subway Circuit

Arabian Nights closes Sept 11. Jones Beach show had \$30,000 worth of repair damage from recent hurricane... Oklahoma opens 3 week run at Lambertville, NJ, Music Circus... Constance Bennett stars in Sabrina Fair at Bucks County, PA. Playhouse... Dial M For Murder with Donald Woods opens at Parkway, St John's Pl, Brooklyn Sept 7 and at Jamaica Theatre, Queens Sept 14. Other bills will be My Three Angels and Guys and Dolls. Latter opens Sept 26 at Jamaica. Matinees Wed, Sat, Sun.

Other Broadways

Deborah Kerr will star with Laurence Olivier in Shakespearean repertory which Old Vic will present in London in 1955... Blues Opera will debut in Paris Dec 9... Midsummer Night's Dream production of Old Vic which opens in NY Sept 21 debuted at Edinburgh Festival... Oklahoma touring company which will hit 150 towns in US and Canada starting next month will be directed by Charles Atkin.

CRITICAL DIGEST
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